
Colorful Slide Rules

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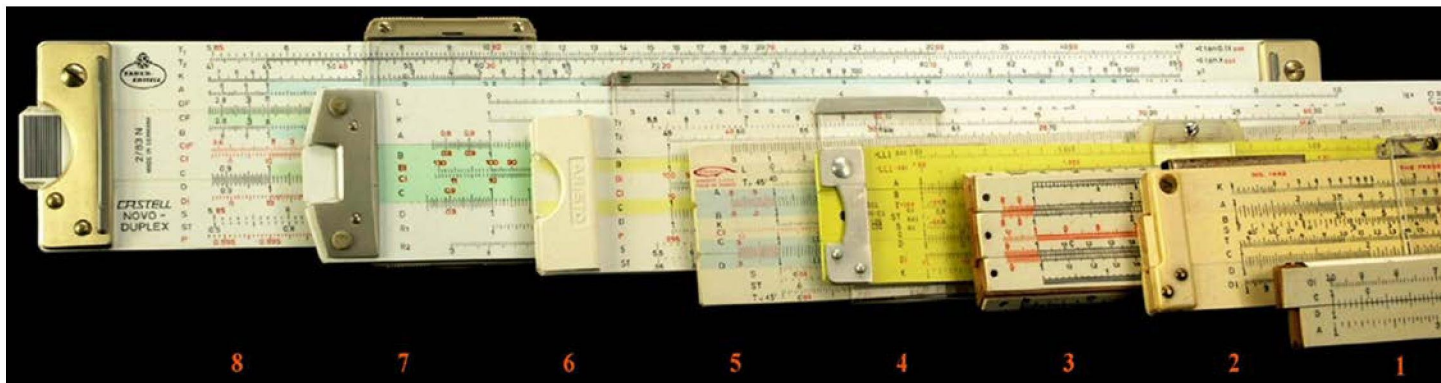


FIGURE 1.
Use of color on slide rules

Slide rules in general were tools with a functional design, not noted for artistic embellishments - excepting some manufacturer's logo graphics. "Form follows function": a rectangular surface dimensioned for the required set of scales. Even some charming variations in the shape of duplex bridges were actually designed for a better grip of fingers on the slide.

Another distinctive feature could be found in the use of colors. Even in that aspect it appears that functionality was again the driving force for designers. When the number of scales grew over time so large that adjacent scales could be

read by mistake, colored bands were introduced to ease identification of scales. Especially on well-made rules the gaps between slide and body were almost invisible and it was not easy to keep one's eye on a selected scale. With exactly aligned **A/B** and **C/D** scales it was getting difficult to find those basic scales in the midst of large rules, as the scale identifiers were usually only shown at the extreme left and right ends.

The figure above shows a selection from the author's slide rule collection, from right to left with increasing use of colors on surface, scales and lettering:

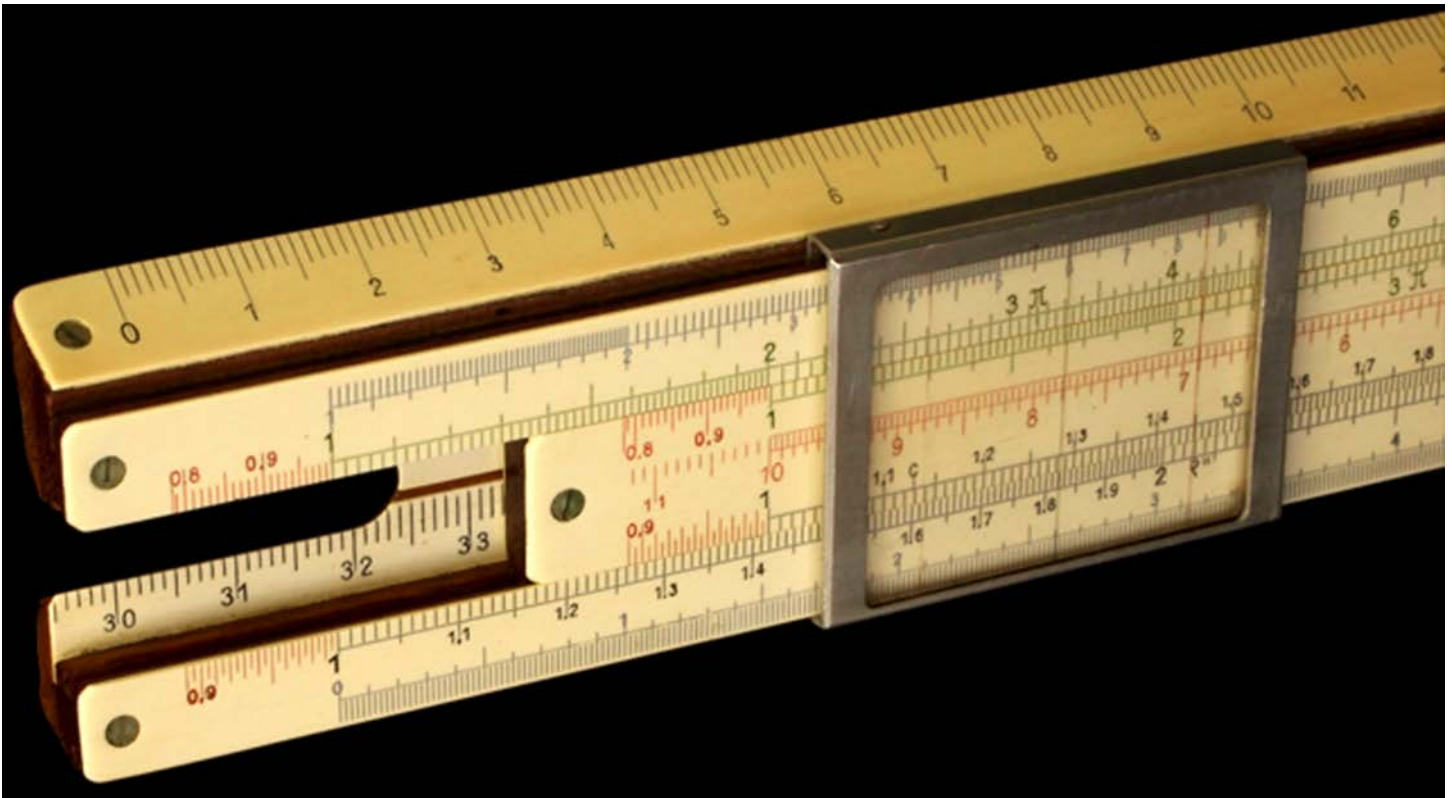


FIGURE 2.
Nestler 23R/3 Rietz Slide Rule

1. The Sun-Hemmi 22 is a very basic slide rule - almost resembling the original two sliding scales by Oughtred. The *black-on-white* scale divisions and letterings are the most basic colors as well.

2. The Post 1442 is a special wartime design to minimize use of scarce materials. The color *red* has been added for lettering, but surprisingly only for identification text, not for scales.

3. The HH Universum Rietz by Koch, Huxhold & Hannemann uses, like so many other brands, the color *red* for the *CI* scale and for the extension areas of *A/B* and *C/D*-scales.

4. The Pickett N-500-ES has the trademark “Eye-Saver” color *yellow* over the full surface of the rule, claiming better readability. The color *red* is used to distinguish alternate value symbols on a scale, but all scale divisions are still black.

5. The Graphoplex 1600 uses one out of a variety of methods to identify scales on the edge between slide and body of the rule: here the edge scales *A/B* and *C/D* are colored pastel *blue*.

6. The Aristo 0908 Trilog modifies this method by coloring only the *B* and *C*-scale with a *yellow* so pale, that it has often faded on older rules that have seen too much daylight.

7. The Nestler 289 Rietz Duplex addresses the same problem by coloring the complete slide surface a pastel *green*.

8. The Faber-Castell 2/83N Novo-Duplex is famous for its sheer size and its large number of scales (31) which increases the probability of confusion between scales. Therefore soft *green* and *blue* colored bands were applied to single out various scale groups.

A most elegant use of colors however is found on one of the many variations of the Nestler 23R/3 Rietz: *blue* (*K, L*), *green* (*A/B*), *red* (*CI*) and black (*C/D*) have been used to distinguish between only those seven scales. Not in colored bands but in the scale divisions themselves, where the blue in the cube scale on top and the log scale at the bottom end is so subtle that in France it might be called a “*soupeçon de bleu*”, see picture above.

This is one of my favorites!